DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 796 CG 021 283

AUTHOR Northcutt, Cecilia A.; Newlon, Betty J.
TITLE Elementary School Teachers: Their Sources of Encouragement and Strategies for Intervention.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Birth Order; *Counselor Teacher Cooperation; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; School Counselors; *Teacher Burnout; *Teacher Morale; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Encouragement

ABSTRACT

Teachers who feel discouraged have difficulty solving problems and finding alternatives to situations. Discouraged teachers need to develop an awareness of their own sources of encouragement, of the encouragement process itself, and of how to apply the encouragement process to themselves. A study of elementary school teachers revealed that teachers as a group perceived their students as their greatest source of encouragement. They ranked themselves second and other teachers and family third. Birth order influenced teachers' rankings of these three sources of encouragement, and can be used to help counselors design interventions to help teachers in need of encouragement. Youngest and middle ordinal position teachers who tend to be "other oriented" might benefit from the counselor teaching components of encouragement to the teacher and students through classroom discussions, or through the establishment of a peer support group among teachers. Oldest and only ordinal position teachers who tend to be "self oriented" might benefit from learning how to increase their level of self-encouragement through in-service workshops. All teachers can benefit from learning to be self-forgiving, to appreciate oneself, to avoid comparing oneself to others, to focus on the progress of one's own efforts, and to make choices and take responsibility for those choices. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED3017796

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS; THEIR SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION

Cecilia A. Northcutt, Ph. D.

Betty J. Newlon, Ed.D.

Division of Counseling and Guidance

School of Family and Consumer Resources

The University of Arizona

Tucson, Az 85721

CG 021283

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Cecilia A. Northcutt

Betty J. Newlon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS:

THEIR SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION

Much has been written about teachers and their role in encouraging students (Hillman, 1981; Thompson & Jacques, 1980; Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980). Dreikurs states that "an encouraging attitude in one person can offset many discouraging experiences to which the child is exposed" (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, p. 4). Numerous authors have explained, outlined and reviewed ways that teachers can, and should be, sources of encouragement to their students (Dinkmeyer, 1968; Dreikurs, Grunwald & Pepper, 1971; Hillman, 1981). According to Adler (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1967),

> "An educator's most important task, one might almost say his holy duty, is to see to it that no child is discouraged at school, and that a child who enters school already discouraged regains his self-confidence through his school and his teacher" (p. 399).

With the emphasis on the encouragement of students, it is noteworthy that little has been written about encouraging teachers (McKay, 1972).

Why is the discouraged teacher of concern to the school counselor? The discouraged teacher cannot perceive the possibility of winning a battle, solving problems, finding alternatives, or even moving toward possible solutions. These teachers have neither

confidence in their own ability nor in the abilities of others and assume they have no chance to change and are filled with pessimism (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963).

In order to break this cycle, teachers need some awareness of their own sources of encouragement including some understanding of the encouragement process, and how to apply the encouragement process to themselves.

In a recent study, elementary school teachers from a large metropolitan school district in the southwest were surveyed to identify their sources of perceived encouragement (Northcutt, 1985). The sample was randomly selected from 67 schools and the subjects (N=113) were classroom teachers who voluntarily completed an 8-item questionnaire.

In this correlational study, sources of encouragement were defined as the degree to which a teacher perceived support from students, family, principals, other teachers, self, parents, staff and central administration. Teachers were also asked to identify their ordinal position in their family of origin, i.e. only child, oldest child, middle child, youngest child. In line with other Adlerian studies (O'Connell, 1975), this study hypothesized that sources of encouragement would be perceived differently by the teachers in the different ordinal positions.

Teachers as a group perceived their students as their greatest source of encouragement. They ranked themselves as the second greatest source and other teachers and family ranked third. The ranking of perceived encouragement by the ordinal position data indicated that:

> Youngest ordinal position teachers perceived themselves as being the most encouraged. Their primary source of encouragement was their students and their secondary source was other teachers.
>
> Middle ordinal position teachers perceived themselves as the second highest in overall encouragement. Their primary source of encouragement was their students and their secondary source was self encouragement.
>
> Only ordinal position teachers were third with most of their encouragement coming from their students followed by self-encouragement.
>
> Oldest ordinal position teachers had the lowest overall perception of encouragement. They had some self encouragement and perceived somewhat less encouragement from their students.

Overall, the teachers ranked their sources of encouragement as (1) their students, (2) themselves, and (3) other teachers and family. Ordinal position

influenced teachers' rankings of these three sources of encouragement.

With this general information in mind, school counselors can design specific interventions, e.g., "encouragement training" to enable teachers to identify and increase encouragement for themselves.

For purposes of "encouragement training" the ordinal positions can be classified into two groups: Youngest and Middle ordinal position teachers who tend to be more "other oriented" in their perceived sources of encouragement and Oldest and Only ordinal position teachers who tend to be more "self oriented".

In order to teach the process of encouragement, it is important for the counselor to model encouraging behavior for others. The counselor as encourager focuses on the individuals' resources in order to build that person's self-esteem, self-confidence, and feelings of worth (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980).

One possibility for "other oriented" encouragement training (youngest and middle ordinal positions) would be for the counselor to teach the specific components of encouragement to the teacher and students through classroom discussions. These discussions would include: listening to feelings, responding congruently, showing genuine enthusiasm, focusing on resources, helping others see alternatives, seeing the humor in a situation, focusing on efforts, combating discouraging

beliefs, encouraging commitment, encouraging mutual feedback, and being respectful (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980, p. 79).

Another possibility for "other oriented" encouragement training would be the establishment of a peer support group among the teachers (Beach & Levine, 1973). Pairing an encouraging teacher with one who is discouraged may enable both teachers to benefit and learn together by promoting constructive problem solving and closer working relationships (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980).

Teaching all teachers, especially those of the oldest and only ordinal position, how to increase their level of self-encouragement is vital. Counselors can provide the opportunity for teachers to learn how to increase their level of encouragement through in-service workshops at the beginning of the school year with ongoing follow-up during the year. Topics for in-service would include: (1) making choices and taking responsibility for your choices, (2) trusting your own evaluations of the world, (3) becoming more independent of others' opinions, (4) developing the ability to disagree when appropriate, (5) increasing social interest by involvement and contributions, (6) taking risks, and (7) perceiving the alternatives in any situation (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980).

In order to be a resource to others, one must feel good about themselves. According to Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1980, p. 288), "When you are self-encouraging, you are able to establish your worth through self-validation, in contrast to waiting to see if others give you their approval." Teachers can learn how to validate themselves by focusing on the following concepts.

1. Self-forgiveness - no one is perfect: Learning to view mistakes as a part of the learning, growing process enables individuals to give themselves the permission to be imperfect, and to have the courage to accept new and different challenges.
2. Learn to appreciate yourself: Give yourself compliments and accept others compliments. Recognize the value of effort as well as the completion of a task.
3. Refuse to compare yourself to others: In a system that fosters competition, this may be viewed as alien and impossible. It is, however, more productive and encouraging for individuals to measure their own growth and progress than to compare themselves to others.
4. Focus on the progress of your own efforts: Self-validation requires that individuals focus on their own efforts, contributions and

assets as well as measuring their own progress. This requires determining one's own priorities and being willing to take risks, to try new ideas.

5. Make choices and take responsibility for those choices: When individual's take responsibility for their own choices they exercise more control over their lives. Inherent with making choices is the process of identifying alternatives, i.e., having Plan B as an option if and when Plan A is no longer feasible (Losoncy, 1980).

As teachers identify alternatives and take responsibility for their own choices, they will learn to rely on their own perceptions and decision; to learn to trust themselves and to encourage themselves.

Summary

In order for teachers to be encouraging to others, they must themselves be encouraged. A prime function of teachers is to encourage their students, therefore, it is important that teachers identify their own sources of encouragement and increase the level of their encouragement.

Teachers perceive their sources of encouragement differently, depending, in part, on their ordinal position. Youngest ordinal position and Middle ordinal position teachers tend to be more externally encouraged

(by their students) and Oldest ordinal position and Only ordinal position teachers tend to be more internally encouraged (by themselves). By providing both "other oriented" and "self oriented" encouragement training, teachers will have the opportunity to increase their sources of encouragement. Perhaps by having access to both types of encouragement training, the "other oriented" teachers may learn to be more self-encouraging and the "self oriented" teachers may learn to accept more encouragement from others.

References

Ansbacher, H. & Ansbacher, R. (1967). The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. Harper and Row, New York.

Beach, D. R. & Levine, M. (1973). Teacher discussion groups: A community mental health approach. International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 19, 102-109.

Dinkmeyer, D. C. (ed.) (1968). Guidance and counseling in the elementary school: Readings in theory and practice. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, In., New York.

Dinkmeyer, D. & Dreikurs, R. (1963). Encouraging children to learn: The encouragement process. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Dinkmeyer, D. & Losoncy, L. E. (1980). The encouragement book. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B., & Pepper, F. (1971). Maintaining sanity in the classroom: Illustrated teaching techniques. Harper & Row, New York.

Hillman, B. W. (1981). Teaching with confidence: How to get off the classroom wall. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL.

Losoncy, L. (1980). You can do it: How to encourage yourself. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

McKay, G. D. (1972). Counseling with the resistant teacher. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling,

Northcutt, C (1985). Elementary teachers perception of encouragement and birth order. Paper presented at Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, Oklahoma City, OK.

O'Connell, W. E. (1975). Action therapy and Adlerian theory. Alfred Adler Institute, Chicago, IL.